

The Role of University Education: A Perspective of Youth Empowerment in Kenya.

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine the extent to which University Education contributes to youth empowerment in Kenya. What motivates the researcher is the increasing number of youths pursuing a second degree, thinking that what they lack is education to get a job. What remains predicament is the fact that quite a number of youths still possess a mindset of permanent and pensionable job. Unemployment rate in Kenya has been increasing from 12.7% (2006) to 40% (2011). The research analyses three scenarios: university programmes, pedagogy and business attitudes of graduates. The study employed descriptive survey research design to explore the business attitudes and skills of graduates. The target population was university graduates who engage in business with a total of 75 respondents. Purposive and Snowball sampling were used to obtain 25 respondents from each county of Kericho, Bomet and Narok. The graduates who engaged in business in towns were identified and ask to identify others in turn, until the required sample was obtained. Primary data was collected using observation, interview guide and questionnaires. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) result, $P \leq 0.05$, ($P=0.00$), revealed a positive and significant relationship between youth empowerment and the role of university education. The regression coefficient of determination representing youth empowerment indicates that University education contributes 62.8% (a value of $R=0.628$) youth empowerment. Respondents pointed rare opportunities in their areas of specialization making them to resort to other areas for survival. The university programmes should be tailored to the modern reality in the job market to gain competitive career market.

Key words: University Education, Graduates, Role, Youth Empowerment.

Introduction

UNESCO (2005) argues that after finishing formal education, young people should be able to subsequently make successful transition from school to work with the skills and knowledge they acquired. It is desirable of higher education to produce graduates who have ability to think critically and have personal, social and communication. Primary promotes growth, imparts literacy and numeracy skills and lays a firm foundation for further formal education, training and life-long learning. Secondary education on the other hand caters for further education of primary school leavers.

In line with the Constitution of Kenya (2010), the Universities Act No. 42, 2012 was assented to on 13th December 2012 by Gazette notice No.192. It clearly

spells out the objectives of university education. It provides for development and regulation of University education and centralized admission of students to tertiary institutions. Universities are key institutions for social change. However, university education seems to engage learners without a clear vision of the kind of society they intend to work in. The university Act establishes Commission for University Education (CUE) with the powers of overseeing the establishment, governance, management and quality assurance in Kenyan institutions of higher learning. The University Act requires CUE to liaise with the public and private sector to develop a national manpower strategy. It also requires involvement of professional & industry players in the

running of universities in order to align the quality of graduates with the needs of the job market. The mess of the policy on paper rather than in practice relays a paradox in higher institutions of learning.

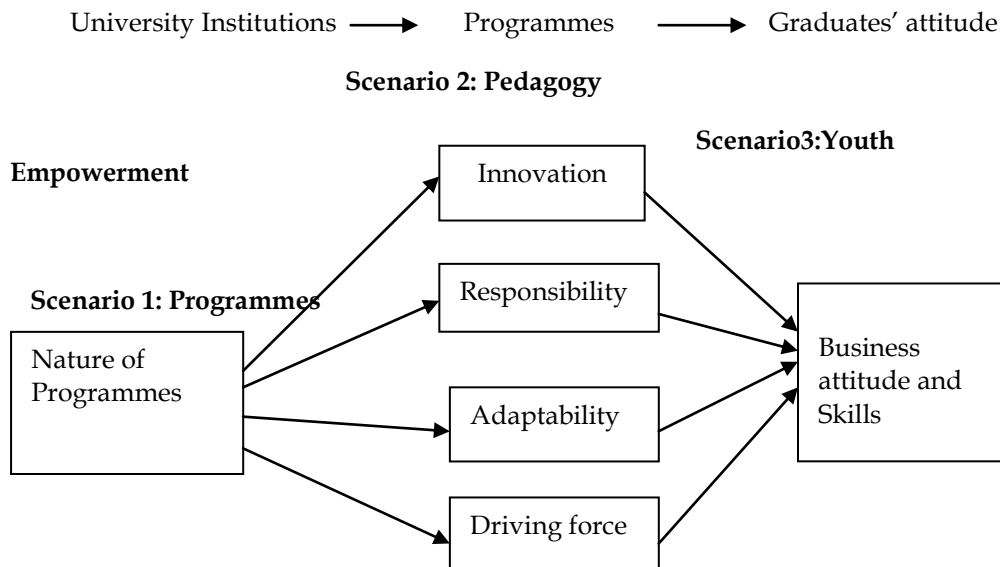
Omolo (2012) observes the increasing number of youths pursuing a second degree which is not always the answer to unemployment. Education is the source of power which can be used to shape & transform youths' economic life. What remains predicament is the fact that unemployment rate in Kenya has been increasing from 12.7% (2006) to 40% (2011) (World Bank, 2014).

Obanya (2002) contends that education should focus on producing students who are ready to fill available jobs in a competitive economy. This means that higher education must be more closely

tied to the businesses and industries that manage the market economy. There is dilemma whether the present education system is "too elaborate" or "too loose". Quality assurance has become a main worry for university education due to leadership gap that exists in most universities.

There is little filling of the void of universities in the use of technology, innovation, advocacy and entrepreneurial philosophy that can transform the youths education to entrepreneurship skills. The study intends to fill the gap by analyzing three scenarios. Scenario 1: Input in terms of nature of programmes, Scenario 2: pedagogy, Scenario 3: the output of interaction in form of business attitude and skills.

Diagram1: Three possible Scenarios for University Education and Youth empowerment



The University institutions are expected to provide enabling environment for effective interaction between

programmes and students to produce a graduate with business attitude and skills.

Review of Literature

The rationale for university education in Kenya was based on the country's desire to create highly trained manpower that could replace colonial administrators. The Ominde commission Report (1964) recommended reform in education to make it more responsive to the needs of the society in Kenya. By 1974, provision of education had expanded greatly and the number of students seeking university education was becoming difficult to adequately finance. The cost of education continues to raise concerns for the stakeholders. The cost has been increasing over the past years. The enactment of the university education act by parliament got started in 2012. Graduates development in the universities seems to have "skills gap" contrary to the desires of Ominde commission recommendations.

Tairo (2006) argues that the nature of training of teaching staff in universities in Kenya is wanting. The poor state of lecturers' remuneration has caused the best of the brains to go searching for better terms abroad or in the county governments. The survey indicates that over 40% of lecturers perform part-time duties in other institutions. This has resulted in teaching staff devoting little attention to research or improving teaching and mentorship of students. The rapid expansion of universities in Kenya has overstretched the services. Rote learning is common and lecturers dictate their notes to overcrowded classes. The passive approaches to teaching have little value to youth empowerment. The mode of assessment makes students still pass the exams and hold certificates that lack corresponding skills required for the job market. These

also make university education and graduates out of reality in the markets.

Farrant (1960) asserts that not all learning is education. Some lecturers promote rote learning, mechanical training, indoctrination or brainwashing. Education deals with knowledge that is capable of achieving a voluntary and committed response from the learner. It should also leads to a quality of understanding that gives rise to new mental perspectives in the learner and uses methods that encourage the exercise of judgment by the learner and the use of his/her critical faculties. Farrant argues that university should provide holistic or integrated education with various branches of knowledge. Newman (2006) maintains that the purpose of the university is "teaching universal knowledge".

Juma (2006) says that the new generation of universities ought to serve as engines of both community development and social replenishment. Nyerere (1964) articulates that education is not just something that happens in classrooms alone, but learning from others, & from experience of past success or failures. Nyerere's views are that the objectives of education should be derived from needs of that society. And the role of education is to inculcate a sense of commitment to the community. Nyerere recommends for education that leads to people who are ready for various responsibilities. The country should focuses on education that prepares young people for the work and make judgments on all the issues affecting them. The Education desire should produce people with an inquiring mind, an ability to learn from what others do,

and adopt a basic confidence as free members of society.

There is dilemma of the relevancy of mushrooming universities in youth empowerment in Kenya. Olufunke and Olajire (2009) assert that the role of higher education in preparing youth for labour market is becoming more challenging in the modern society. The effort of higher education in producing relevant and skillful graduates to meet the needs and demand of modern world labour market is a great task for education management. The university graduates should be ready to apply values, knowledge, attitudes and skills learnt in school to serve the society. The systems of education in Kenya tend to value cognitive aspect of learning whereas University education should help one foster the importance of work & dignity.

Through empowerment, youths are provided with opportunities to develop the competencies they need to become successful contributors to their communities (Pittman & Wright, 1991). One of the best ways to enhance youth empowerment is through quality university education. Youth transformation for job readiness is facing the challenges in delivering students the right set of skills and knowledge demanded by the labour market. Higher education has major role to play in empowering youth for labour market. There is the need for higher education to see new reality of education in modern world. The reality recognizes that the primary purpose of higher education is to transform students into critical and lifelong learners. Youth empowerment is an ongoing process of human growth and development; a framework for youth that focuses in their capacities, strengths

and developmental needs (Olufunke and Olajire, 2009). Youth empowerment promotes greater participation and involvement of youth in the socioeconomic and public affairs of the community.

Ololube (2007) implied that university education contributes to helping an individual develop personality as a person, acquire skills and professional abilities for life endeavors, develop the right types of attitudes, understanding, concepts and values and be productive member of his/her society. Hence, it is believed that with high-quality university education in place, youth empowerment is guaranteed (Obanya, 2002; Amedeker, 2005 and Onuselogu, 2008). Without the provision of adequate resources to meet up with teeming students' enrolment, the goal of youth empowerment cannot be meaningfully achieved.

Manson and Cranmer (2006) articulates that success in the graduate labour market is typically defined as graduates securing employment in jobs which make appropriate use of the skills and knowledge developed in the course of their university studies. Employers attach much importance to graduate employability which seems to refer to work readiness. Higher education should therefore make closer links with employers to help them identify and adopt strategies to overcome any skills shortages and to be responsive provider of education in areas of higher - level skill shortage

Boateng (2002) lists the determinants of mismatches between job-seekers and employers: the type and quality of curriculum, career and academic advisory services; admission and evaluation policies in the tertiary sector;

and the role of employers association in the delivery of education services. To enhance quality university education for youth empowerment, the quality of financial resource management must be assured. Where the youths in universities are not meaningfully empowered through university

education, is quite difficult for them to recognize opportunities and maximize their capabilities for productive living. These, hindering issues, therefore must be urgently addressed using relevant policy and management strategies if the dream of youth empowerment through university education would be realized.

Methodology

The study employed descriptive survey research design to explore the business attitudes and skills of graduates. The target population was university graduates engage in business. Being a survey study, a portion of the population was used to obtain information that would answer research questions. The study focused on a sample of 75 graduates the three counties of Kericho, Bomet and Narok. Purposive and Snowball sampling was used to obtain 25 respondents from each county. Some graduates who are engaged in business were identified and in turn identify others until the required sample was obtained.

The researcher visited the towns in the three counties to reach respondents who have completed university education and engage in business. Primary data was collected using structured

questionnaires, interview and observation schedules. The items in the questionnaire were closed-ended and based on a seven-point likert scale. The respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement with the items using the key: 1-Never, 2-Rarely, 3-Occasionally, 4-Frequently, 5-Very frequently, 6-Almost Always 7-Always. The likert scale was used so that the researcher would obtain interval scale data that is amenable to parametric statistics. Cooper and Schindler (2010) assert that the likert scale measurement is applicable for collecting interval data for use in quantitative analysis. Face to Face interview was conducted at random to establish the opinions and attitudes of graduates toward business. Observation guide was used to assess the business premises.

Results

The responses from the structured questionnaire were analysed using multiple linear regressions to determine relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables(s). The model shows the influence of university education indicators on youth empowerment as captured by the research questions (X_1 , X_2 , X_3 , X_4 , X_5). A multiple linear regression was undertaken as follows:

$$YEP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \mu_i$$

Where: YEP: Youth Empowerment, β_0 : intercept/constant, β : Coefficients of Regression, X_1 : Innovative, X_2 : Ready for various responsibilities, X_3 : Adapt reality in the job market, X_4 : Capable of applying values and skills, X_5 : Driving force/engines for community development, μ_i : Error Term.

Table 1: Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Standard error of estimate
1	.628	.532	.526		.647

Predictors (constant): Innovative, Ready for various responsibilities, Adapt reality in the job market, Capable of applying values and skills, Serves as engines for community development. The results in table 1 indicates a coefficient of Regression, $R=0.628$ which

is a strong positive relationship between independent and dependent variables. The coefficient of determination $R^2=0.532$ shows the predictive power of the model (53.2%) of variations in the youth empowerment which is explained by the role of university education.

Table 2: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Unstandardized Coefficients	T	sign
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.798	.705		1.115	.257
Innovative (X_1)	.364	.182	.345	1.981	.062
Ready for various responsibilities (X_2)	.046	.189	.487	2.452	.024
Adapt reality in the job market (X_3)	.057	.135	.037	.086	.867
Capable of applying values and skills (X_4)	.065	.169	.087	.281	.854
engines for community development (X_5)	.099	.195	.081	.486	.784

Multiple regressions were used to determine the predictive effects of the role of university education on youth empowerment in society. A multivariate regression model was applied to establish the relative significance of the independent variables with regards to youth empowerment.

From table 2, when the values of independent variables are zero, Youth empowerment would be 0.798. One unit increase in independent variable increases one in dependent variable. When $X_1 = 0.364$, means 0.364 units in Innovation contribute to the increase in Youth empowerment, $X_2=0.057$, Various responsibilities result in 0.057 units

increase in Youth empowerment, $X_3 = 0.043$, adaptability contributes increase of 0.043 units in youth empowerment. , $X_4 = 0.065$, application of skills contribute 0.065

units to youth empowerment, , $X_5 = 0.099$, serving as engines for community development increases 0.099 units to youth empowerment.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Results

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sign
Regression	21.8	5	4.36	7.730	.000
Residual	39.48	70	.564		
Total	60.28	75			

ANOVA test was carried out to test the null hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between the Role of university education and youth empowerment at confidence level of 95%. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

results; $P \leq 0.05$ ($P=0.00$), thus the hypothesis is rejected. This confirms that there is correlation between youth empowerment and the role of university education. It also indicates model fitness of the variables.

Discussion of Results

Scenario 1: University Programmes

Career development is a lifelong process of managing research, learning, work, leisure and transitions in order to move toward a personally determined and evolving preferred future. Career development also provides a very great role towards personal development as it offers a person with a ground of opting a career to undertake in the future. With the widening of student choices of programmes, there is greater competition for jobs. Market forces give rise to institutions that become specialized by function of teaching, research and field of business.

The study observed that many graduates work outside their areas of specialization in carrying out small businesses. The ability of graduates to adapt to job market is low. This implies

that University education has not made enough interaction with labour market and curriculum seems not to meet the reality of modern world of work.

The students reported that they are not given adequate opportunity to do internships as a normal part of the educational experience. The study also observed that many graduates work outside their areas of specialization in carrying out small businesses. Students who interacted with the research assert that there are rare opportunities in their areas of specialization making them to resort to other areas for survival.

The study agrees with the assertions of Lancrin (2004); Newman (2006) and Nyerere (1964) that the purpose of the university is "teaching universal knowledge" and help students accept

values appropriate to their own context. However, most of the graduates

Scenario 2: Pedagogy

The essence of teaching requires mastery of human interaction skills that is grounded in pedagogical or androgogical skills. The teaching should elicit activate experiences, connection with the world in meaningful ways, and inspire exploration of new horizons and new experiences.

Teaching at university level in Kenya today is characterized by: overwhelming proportion of lecturers with little training in pedagogy. There is limited interaction with students, llimited resources and facilities for efficient and effective instruction, little mentoring process for students, use of old fashioned instructional paradigms. However, there is a strong divergence in the status of academic, with the average teaching staff being less qualified with lower status. Despite lecturers dictating their notes and hand outs to overcrowded classes, students still pass the exams and hold certificates that lack corresponding skills required for the job market.

The research established that university education offers graduates 62.8%

Scenario 3: Youth Empowerment

The aim of the study was to determine the role of university education on youth empowerment in Kenya. The results, $P \leq 0.05$ ($P=0.000$), revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between youth empowerment and the role of university education. The coefficient of determination representing youth

observed in the survey use their minor careers to generate earnings.

knowledge, attitudes & skills to serve the society. The students acquire innovation of 36.4% in youth empowerment. Readiness of graduates to do various responsibilities shots 5.7% to youth empowerment. While ability to adapt to job market adds 4.6% to youth empowerment while application of skills contributes 6.5% to youth empowerment. Serving as engines for community development contribute youth empowerment by 9.9%. It was observed that most graduates carry out tasks that are not related to what they learn in their area of specialization.

The results of this study are in consistent with Olufunke and Olajire (2009) and Farrant (1960) who assert that education should leads to a quality of understanding and that university should provide holistic education with various branches of knowledge. It confirms that youth empowerment promotes greater participation and involvement of youth in the socio-economic life.

empowerment indicates a value of $R=0.628$. This means that the independent variables studied contribute to 62.8% youth empowerment. The remaining 37.2% is accounted for by other factors. This means that the graduates are able to utilize university education in improving their skills toward business.

Conclusion

The systems of education in Kenya tend to value cognitive aspect of learning rather than practical work. This creates "skills gap" in the labour market. Youth education, specifically for empowerment purpose, has become a necessity for sustainable development. If the youths in universities are meaningfully empowered, it is easy for them to recognize opportunities,

develop positive attitude for business and maximize their capabilities for productive living.

The universities need to expose graduates to work experience through proper pedagogies, internships and volunteering work. The university programmes should be tailored to the modern reality in the job market.

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